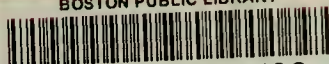


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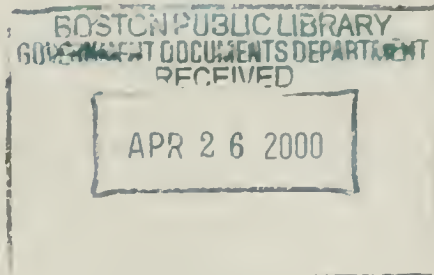
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Central Boston

Open Space Plan 2000

Renewing the Legacy ... Fulfilling the Vision

DRAFT

City of Boston
Parks & Recreation Department



Thomas M. Menino
Mayor

Justine M. Liff
Commissioner of Parks & Recreation

To submit comments, please call Aldo Ghirin at 635-4505 x6515, fax 635-3256 or
e-mail srplnr@ci.boston.ma.us



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Central Boston

The Setting

History

Included within the BRA-designated Central Boston neighborhood discussed here are the downtown financial district, Government Center, the Bulfinch Triangle and the discrete residential areas of the North End, West End, the Waterfront and Chinatown.

Originally known as the Shawmut peninsula, the city's civic, commercial and financial core has been located at the site of the modern-day downtown Boston since the city's founding. The Old State House, at the junction of State and Washington Streets, had served as the center of public life since the 17th century. The original Faneuil Hall was built in 142; today with the renovation of Quincy Market as a pedestrianized public space of restaurants and retail shops, the area is a major tourist draw. Christopher Columbus Park, located between the market and the waterfront, provides passive recreation for tourists and North End residents alike.

Throughout the 18th century, increasing development resulted in dense street patterns encircling Fort Hill and eventually reaching the Boston Common. Fort Hill, however, was leveled in 1872, the same year a fire destroyed much of downtown Boston. Now most of the financial district's office towers are located in the area. The recently completed Post Office Square provides critical open space in this otherwise extremely congested area. The park itself is the product of a public-private partnership and exemplifies the advantages of corporate abutters participating in the management of public spaces in the downtown core.

A major influence in the growth of downtown Boston has been the

development of its harbor. At the beginning of the 18th century, Boston's position as a prominent maritime community was secured with the addition of Long Wharf and the building of nearly 40 wharves, more than a dozen shipyards and six ropewalks. With the decline of the shipping industry in the early 1900s, Boston's wharves began to be abandoned, with many buildings remaining vacant until the 1950s when the Central Artery was constructed. Today, wharf renovation and urban renewal have created Boston's newest mixed use district. Harborwalk, a continuous pedestrian path along the water's edge from the South Station area to the North End, links all the publicly accessible open spaces along the waterfront, including those at Rowes Wharf.

During urban renewal the dilapidated Scollay Square area was leveled to make space for a new Government Center, consisting of buildings to accommodate expanding city, state and federal offices. An 11-acre brick-paved plaza in front of the new City Hall was built as the center of this complex. The plaza is regularly used for concerts, political rallies and a farmer's market. The Bulfinch Triangle is the interface between Government Center and the Boston Garden/North Station complex. So called because of Charles Bulfinch's street plan for a triangular area created by the 19th century filling-in of the marshy North Cove, it consists of warehouse structures now rapidly being converted for office uses.

Originally a hilly pasture, the North End, one of Boston's oldest neighborhoods, has been home to



Central Boston

thousands of immigrants. In the early 1800s came the Irish who built mansions and cottages abutting the narrow streets and alleys which to this day distinguish the North End from the rest of the city.

Italians came in large numbers in 1890s and since then the area has been largely Italian. In the 1950s, with the building of the Central Artery, the North End became isolated from the downtown area. The neighborhood contains several sites which are on the Freedom Trail and local residents have accepted the resulting influx of tourists. In fact, the number of restaurants and retail shops have gradually increased over the years.

The coming two decades will transform the character of downtown Boston again. Major factors in that transformation include the completion of wharf restoration, the on-going linkage of the Harborwalk system, and the depression of the Central Artery. The Central Artery depression will create both a linear park and a new surface boulevard-style thoroughfare.

Chinatown

Chinatown/South Cove is located on landfill built on tidal flats to provide additional housing in the early 1800s for Boston's expanding middle-class population. In the 1840s, this area's original residents began to move out of the city. Newcomers were mainly Chinese, Irish, Italian, Jewish, and Syrian immigrants who converted the homes to multi-unit tenements.

Non-residential uses developed on the edges of Chinatown such as South Station, the railroad lines serving it, and the elevated line along Washington Street, constructed in 1899. Many tenements were razed for expansion of the garment industry. After World War II, Chinese

restaurants and specialty shops began to occupy ground floors of residential buildings and a tourist industry began to evolve.

Subsequently, many more housing units were lost due to urban renewal programs. Creation of the Southeast Expressway and the Massachusetts Turnpike, and an increase in traffic along Essex Street, isolated the Chinese residents in the South End from those in South Cove. Old rowhouses were replaced with institutional-scale buildings and high-rise housing towers. Community isolation increased further following the 1974 creation of the "Combat Zone" adult entertainment district. This perceptually cut off Chinatown from the Central Business District as well as from Boston Common and the Public Garden.

Today, Chinatown exists on approximately one-half the land mass it once had, with a population that tripled between 1950 and 1987. The 1990s will be crucial years for the neighborhood in terms of pressures from without and within. The Combat Zone is now a fading memory. The major development known as the Millenium project is a mixed use residential/hotel/commercial and entertainment project that is expected to increase the downtown business and residential population to the west and north of Chinatown. Gains and losses to open land on the east and south of Chinatown are possible with transportation projects still in the design or planning stage: The Central Artery/Third Harbor Tunnel project, the South Station Transportation Center and the development of air rights over the Massachusetts Turnpike.



Central Boston

Meanwhile, the community struggles to provide housing for new immigrants, growing family and elderly populations and non-Asians attracted by the proximity to downtown Boston.

Environment

Geology, Soils, and Topography

Along with the Back Bay and Fenway/Kenmore neighborhoods, Central Boston is among the most geologically altered places on Earth. The original Shawmut Peninsula occupied less than half the area covered today. Underlain by a deeply buried formation of Cambridge Argillite, the natural landscape was comprised of several prominent hills and rolling valleys connected to the mainland by a narrow spit. These hills – Fort Hill, Copps Hill, Beacon Hill, Pemberton Hill, and Mount Vernon – were made primarily of unstratified glacial till and molded into the characteristic streamlined drumlin-shape by the Wisconsin glacier about 18,000 years ago. Of these, only a shortened Beacon Hill remains as a recognizable landform. All the rest were leveled to fill the Back Bay and large expanses of the Harbor shoreline.

The valleys contained sand and gravel deposited and sorted by glacial meltwater and overland drainage. Low-lying areas adjacent to the Harbor and the Charles River Estuary contain both marine and freshwater silt, deposited in stratified layers coincident with changing sea levels over the past 10,000 years.

Environmental and Scenic Resources

Central Boston's major natural resource asset is its proximity to Boston Harbor and the Charles River Basin. Boston Harbor is

the city's most diverse habitat for fish. This is probably one of the few habitats of any kind in the city that supports a generally native wildlife population. This is also a major recreational resource for sport fishing, along with other water-dependant activities.

The commercial aspect of fishing, though integrally tied to the historic economic development of Boston, is almost completely limited to charter boats and other activity supporting sport fishermen. The most significant fin fisheries in Boston Harbor are striped bass, winter flounder, cod, mackerel, bluefish, and monkfish. Other important species are pout, hake, dogfish, menhaden, and killifish. The recent clean-up of Boston Harbor has greatly improved the habitat for all marine wildlife, though populations of several fish species are still imperiled by over-fishing and degraded habitats.

The Charles River Basin provides additional water-related recreational opportunities and aquatic habitat. Fish ladders at the Charles River Dam allow some anadromous species to reach freshwater breeding areas, most notably Atlantic herring. The Basin is also an important feeding and resting area for wintering waterfowl.

Demographics/Housing

Like much of the rest of Boston, this area experienced a rapid decline in its residential population after the Second World War. It finally stabilized in the 1980s due to an increasing in-migration of young professionals looking for 'walk-to-work' residential accommodation. For example, by the 1920s, with the last tenements completed, 35,000 lived in the North



Central Boston

End alone. The 1980 census showed a population total of about 9,000. The 1990 population total in the North End sub-neighborhood showed an increase to a total of 10,935.

Of course, the daytime population of the neighborhood swells, as close to 200,000 persons come to work at downtown offices. In addition, thousands of tourists and business visitors swarm the downtown area.

The median age (per the 1990 census) is high (36.1) compared to the city-wide figure (30.4), with very few persons under 25 years of age (19.9% in Central Boston vs. 36.3% in the city as a whole). This neighborhood has a large elderly population (17.5% for Central Boston versus 11.5% for the city as a whole), including many of Italian ancestry. Multi-family housing dominates the residential sections of Central Boston. High-rise residential towers now make up the former West End in addition to the Harbor Towers and Rowes Wharf complexes on the waterfront. The North End and the Waterfront districts now have many newly converted condominiums; and building typically have mixed uses with shops on the ground floor.

Chinatown

While city-wide, 33% of Boston's residents are immigrants, in Chinatown, 66% were born abroad. The population of 5,000 is 91% Chinese—from the mainland, Hong Kong and Taiwan. Vietnamese, Cambodians and other Asians account for another 2%. Six of every ten households are families. Of all families, 48% have children living with them and 21% of the children are age five or younger. Also, 41% of the families include at least one elder, and 18% have two or more. Compared to the city as a whole,

Chinatown has more families, children and elderly residents. According to available data (1987), 42% of Chinatown household incomes earned below \$10,000 per year, while only seven percent reported income above \$20,000. This compares to a city-wide median income (1985) of \$21,031: That is, 50% of Boston's households earned more than \$21,031.

The many 3- to 5-story brick, 19th century residential buildings are characterized by shops and restaurants on the ground floor. Later and larger loft buildings frame the district on Beach Street, Hudson Street, Kneeland Street and Harrison Avenue. In 1980, the area's median housing value was 87% greater than the city median. Over 95% of Chinatown's residential units are rental. Chinatown, by most measures of housing and population density, ranks the highest for overcrowding among Boston's neighborhoods. In 1985, households in Chinatown averaged 3.6 persons compared to 2.5 persons city-wide. Unit sharing by families and adults is common with 25% of units containing five or more people; 94% of these same units have only one bedroom. When the population tripled from 1950 to 1987, the production of housing units during this period only increased the existing stock by half.

The Open Space System Today

Equity and Investment

In comparison with the rest of the city, the Central Boston area is underserved in terms of open space available to local residents. With a total of slightly less than 56 acres of publicly accessible parks, playgrounds, squares and malls,



Central Boston

this open space must cater to the outdoor needs of the local population (21,700 in Central Boston per 1990 Census) as well as those of office-goers and tourists. For Central Boston, there are 2.6 acres of public open space for every thousand persons, substantially below both the ratio for most other residential areas in Boston and the overall ratio for the city of 5.5 acres per thousand residents. Yet in accordance with the *South End Open Space Study* by the Boston Urban Gardeners (198?), a ratio of 2.5 acres per thousand population is appropriate for inner core urban neighborhoods like Central Boston.

The Boston Parks and Recreation Department has made capital improvements to all its major facilities in the North End, including Langone, Puopolo, Polcari and Cutillo playgrounds, expending almost two million dollars in a five-year period starting from 1987 (see table). The Paul Revere Mall, a Freedom Trail Landmark, was substantially improved. In addition to the above expenditures, many other improvements were made to public places throughout the Central Boston area, by public sector entities as well as through public-private partnerships like the one which built the Park at Post Office Square.

Assessment

The pedestrian environment in Central Boston benefits from its context; the area is at once the civic, historic and economic core of the city. Accordingly, its open spaces provide a rich diversity of experiences. While existing squares, pedestrian malls, passive seating areas and plazas are well distributed, they need to be linked in a comprehensible manner—for example, the waterfront should be easily accessible from Post Office Square and City Hall Plaza. Comprehensive programs

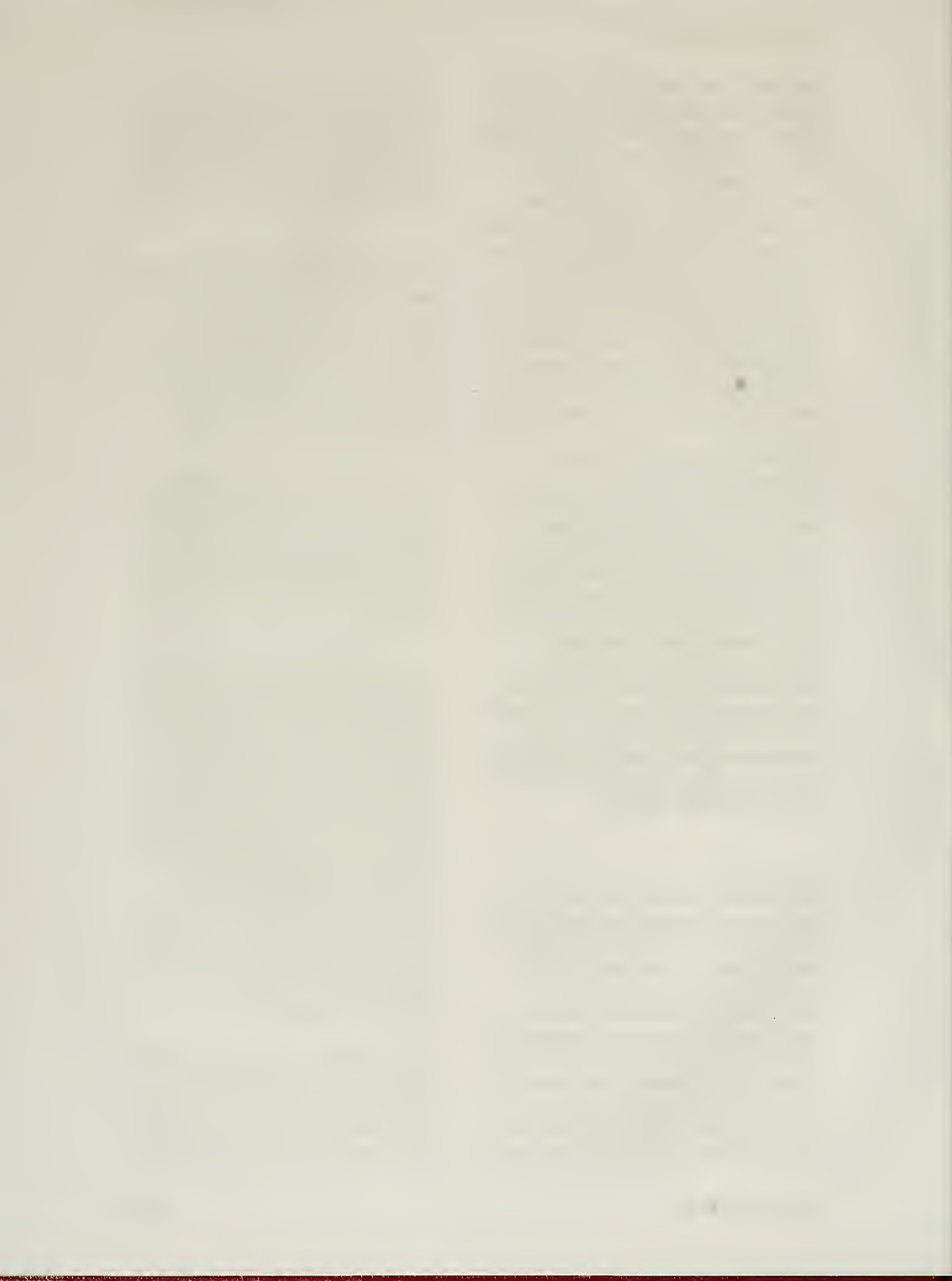
to ensure the perpetual maintenance of all existing and proposed public spaces have not yet been instituted. There continues to be a lack of indoor public gardens for year-round use and for the use of day-care centers.

On the other hand, the residential population located along the waterfront and in the North End urgently requires new playgrounds to accommodate current demands. Also limited are the neighborhood's indoor recreation areas, critical spaces in these dense areas, especially during the winter months.

Finally, the elevated Central Artery now severely limits access to the waterfront, both from the financial district and Government Center. The proposed depression of the artery will eliminate the problem in the coming decade.

In addition to Gateway Park, Chinatown possesses several other open spaces. Oak Street has a small community garden. On Tai Tung Street, a small passive area was recently transferred from the BRA to the Parks Department after benches were removed to discourage vagrancy. Oxford Street has a pocket park. Both Tai Tung Village and Mass Pike Towers have courtyards. Acorn Day Care Center has a tot lot. Statler Park, Lincoln Square and Eliot Norton Park account for an additional 1.3 acres, but they are shared with the greater downtown community.

Pagoda Park, across Kneeland Street to the south, adds another 1.47 acres with three courts and a modest amount of green space. Due to Pagoda Park's location, it is largely used by



Central Boston

teenagers. Owned by the Massachusetts Turnpike Authority, Pagoda Park's contribution to Chinatown's recreational opportunities will be disrupted by its use during the Construction of the South Station Transportation Center bus ramps.

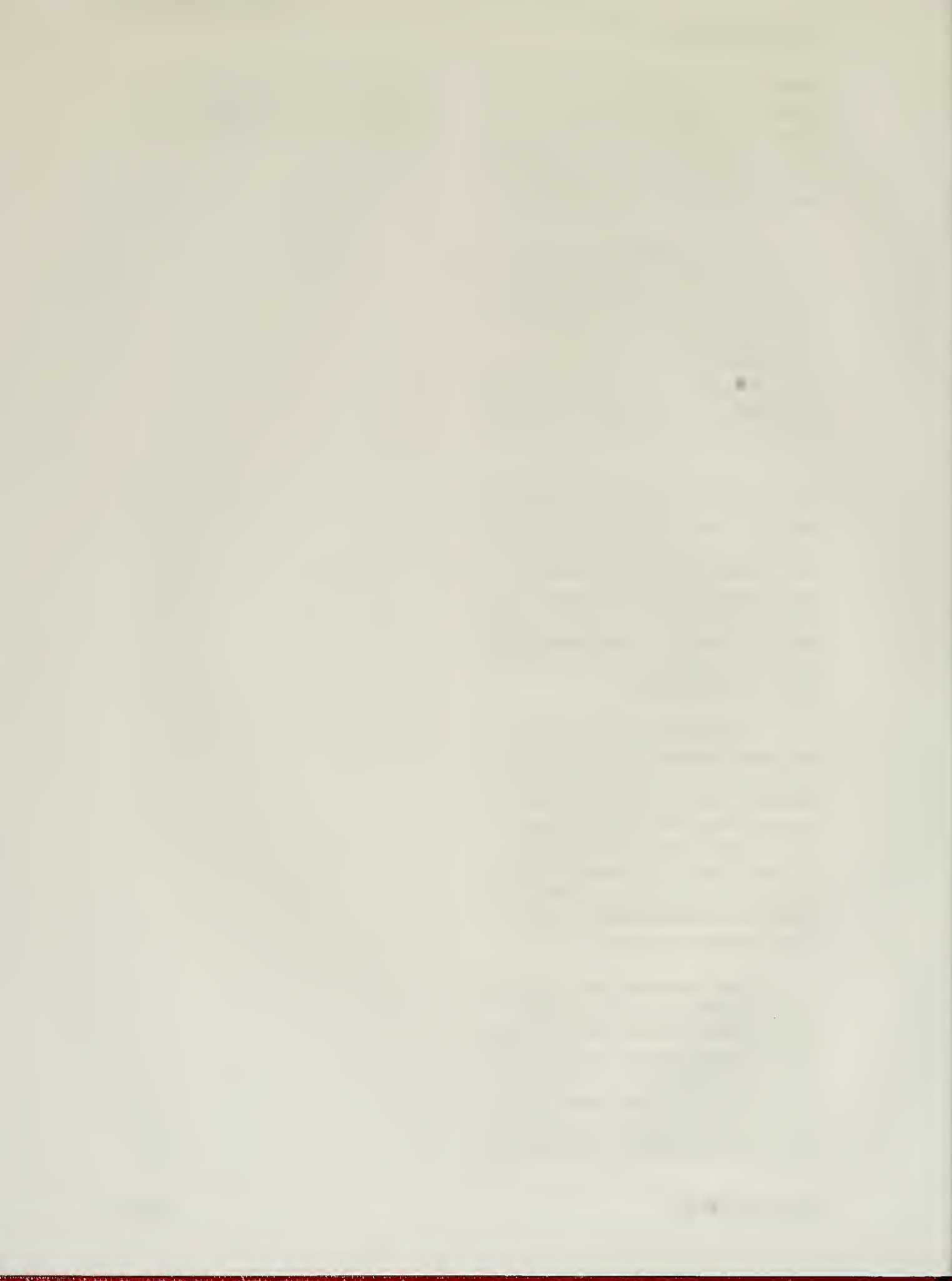
Combat Zone and serving virtually all of Boston's residents and many of its visitors.

Squeezed within the downtown area, Chinatown is a community with extremely challenging land use demands, very little green space and few public recreational facilities. There are compelling needs for additional passive and active recreational areas for extended family groups, including young children, adolescents and the elderly.

In Chinatown there is no public park which contains a children's play area except for Gateway Park. Similarly, there is virtually no public place for the elderly to congregate which is safe, secure and easily accessible. When vagrants dominate Gateway Park, most community users stay away. For security reasons, management authorities must control the use of facilities in the housing complexes.

Pagoda Park serves teens almost exclusively because it has the only public ball courts in the area and because it is located next to a highway ramp and across a major thoroughfare from Chinatown proper. Pending transportation projects will limit Pagoda Park's accessibility. Yet the potential exists for new recreation and open space facilities arising from these same transportation projects.

Other open space near Chinatown is share with other communities. These include Statler Parks and Lincoln Square, which are green but quite small, and Eliot Norton Park, which is not usable in its present condition. There are the 75 acres of Boston Common and the Public Gardens, separated from Chinatown by the



Central Boston

The Next Five Years

While characterized by mature and well-integrated public spaces, Boston's historical inner core has only 56 acres of open space, a quarter of which are hard-scaped plazas, malls, and squares. However, future generations of North End, Bay Village, and Chinatown residents, tourists, and downtown office workers stand to benefit from a radically transformed public realm once both the new Central Artery and the Massachusetts Turnpike Air Rights are realized. A diversity of open space types should be created in these corridors with discrete connections to the neighborhoods and the waterfront (in the spirit of the "walk-to-the-sea" concept) and in tandem with supportive land uses. However, such a vision should be informed by a study of the feasibility of maintaining and operating the parkland.

Goals & Opportunities

North End

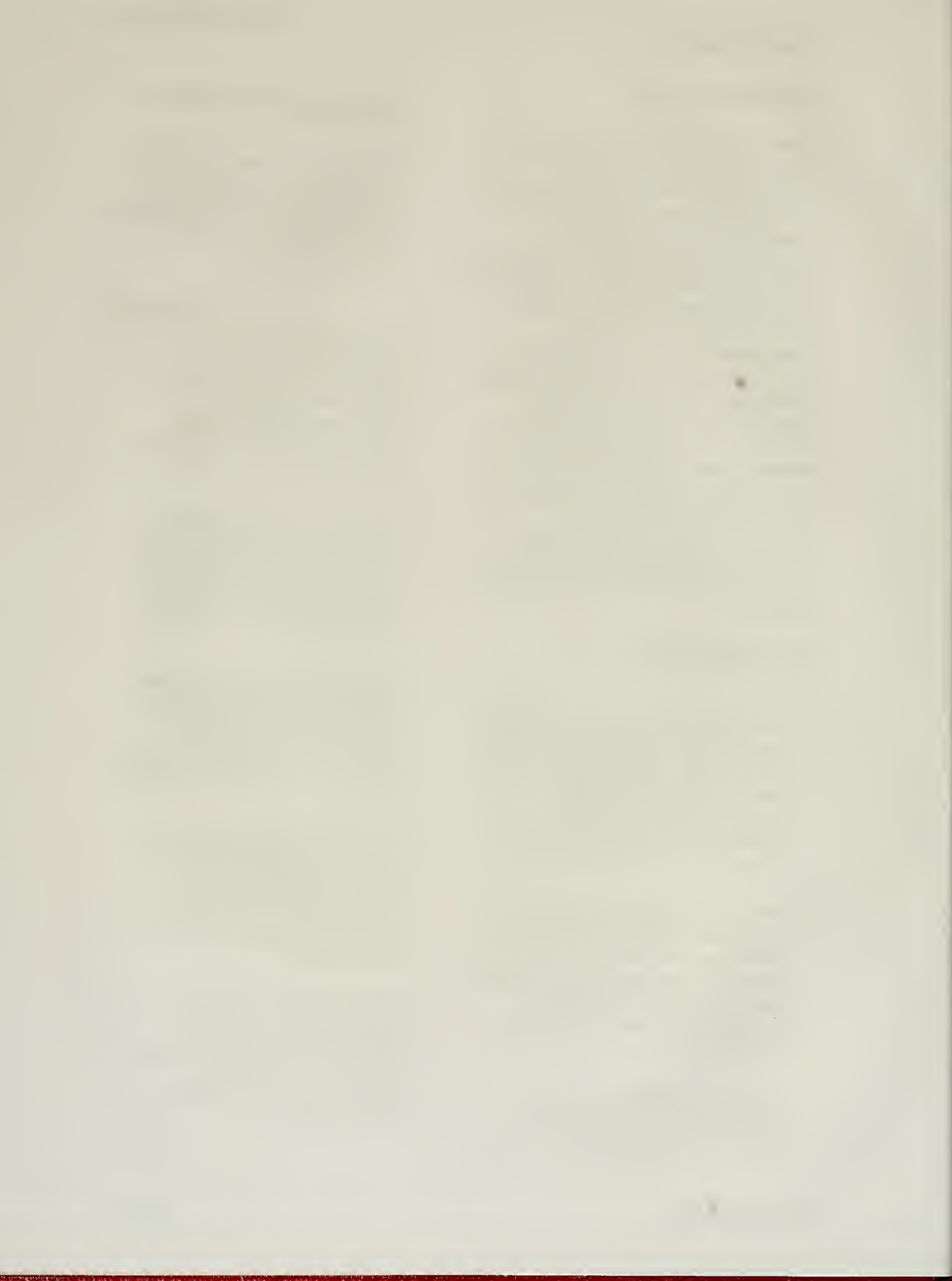
- Use adjacent Central Artery air-rights parcels for a neighborhood park, indoor court facilities, and supporting pocket parks in accordance with the recommendations of the BRA's report *Boston 2000: a Plan for the Central Artery*.
- Seek from all proposed developments on Sargent's and Lewis Wharves a commitment to protect the water in the vicinity of their projects from pollution, and to provide public access as determined by abutters and the local community.
- Complete the Harborwalk along the North End piers and examine the possibility of docking small craft for

community use along Puopolo or Langone Parks.

- Develop a permanent location for the Haymarket by utilizing the reorganization of streets and parcels proposed through the Central Artery improvements.

Downtown

- Develop the new Artery corridor as a new boulevard and linear parkland with a minimum of 75% open space. Support the recommendations in the BRA report *Boston 2000: A Plan for the Central Artery*.
- Enhance the 'Walk-to-the-Sea' concept (from the State House to Long Wharf along State Street) with the creation of a destination use on the relevant new Central Artery parcel.
- Select parcels from the new artery corridor and from the Midtown Cultural District to develop a system of "winter gardens" – indoor open spaces – for year-round public activity.
- Develop underutilized pockets of land in Dewey Square for open spaces in the financial district similar to the Five Cents Plaza and Angell Memorial/Post Office Square Parks.
- Create a link from the Rowes Wharf plaza to the Fort Hill financial district by developing a formal garden between the International Place and Rowes Wharf buildings.



Central Boston

- Preserve currently unrealized open land in the Midtown District for the creation of public spaces which complement cultural activities, and which ensure lively use day and night.
- Develop open space maintenance mechanisms based on the Park at Post Office Square model for the perpetual stewardship of downtown parks.
- Adopt sliver open spaces, such as medians, through maintenance and management agreements with tenants in adjacent building.
- Protect the “public rights-of-way” at the Aquarium and the Harbor Towers during utility relocation to be done by MHD as part of the Central Artery project.

Community Priorities

North End

- Use targeted capital improvement funds for DeFilippo Playground with the new design to be determined through a community process.
- Provide Paul Revere Mall (Prado) with better management and install signs to enforce the dog ordinance. Install additional facilities for the elderly and explore reopening of the comfort station.
- Improve security for North End parks through lighting, programmed year-long uses, signage, and, at Polcari, the construction of bollards to eliminate motorcycle access.
- Determine the future of the Foster Street Playground which is currently used as a parking lot.
- Support the Massachusetts Turnpike Reclamation Project plans to improve parcels at Richmond and North Streets adjacent to the harbor tunnel portals.

Downtown

- Analyze the feasibility of the proposed parkland in the new Artery corridor with respect to its maintenance and management.



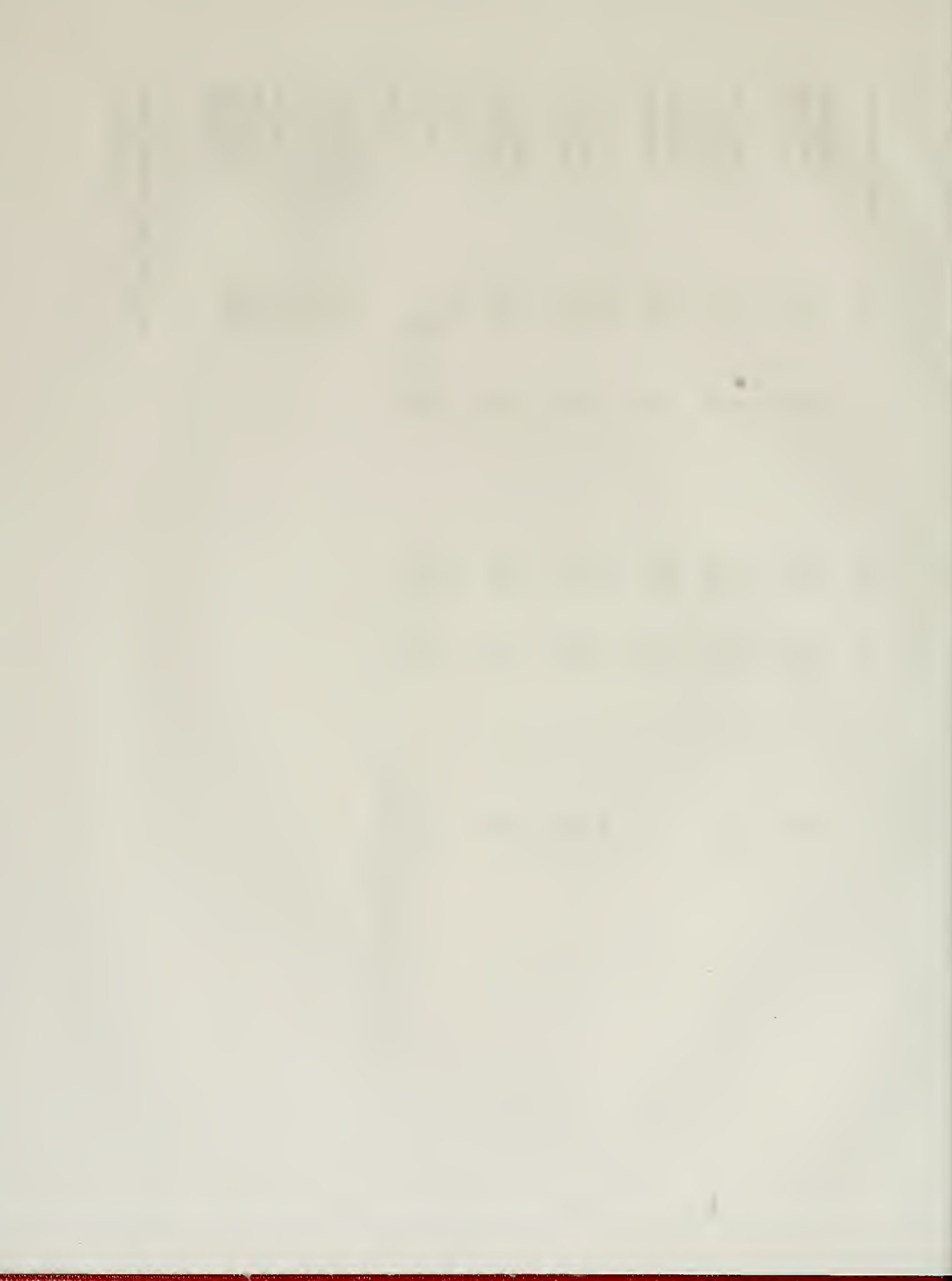
Central Boston

Demographic and Housing Profile

Age

<u>Population</u>	
1990 Census	21,691
1980 Census	22,658
Population growth/ decline, 1980-1990	-4.27%
1998 Estimate	21,767
2003 Projection	21,944

<u>Age</u>	<u>1990 Census</u>		<u>1998 Estimated</u>		<u>Change in percentage of total population in each range, 1990 - 1998</u>
0-4 years	636	3%	605	3%	-0.2
5-9 years	345	2%	642	3%	1.4
10-14 years	384	2%	429	2%	0.2
15-17 years	279	1%	191	1%	-0.4
18-20 years	600	3%	565	3%	-0.2
21-24 years	2232	10%	1544	7%	-3.2
25-29 years	3550	16%	2817	13%	-3.4
30-34 years	2593	12%	2216	10%	-1.8
35-44 years	3359	15%	4059	19%	3.2
45-54 years	2154	10%	2869	13%	3.3
55-59 years	974	4%	1059	5%	0.4
60-64 years	1035	5%	903	4%	-0.6
65-74 years	1869	9%	1835	8%	-0.2
75-84 years	1306	6%	1425	7%	0.5
85 years and over	375	2%	608	3%	1.1



Central Boston
Demographic and Housing Profile
Households and Families

Population	
1990 Census	21,691
1980 Census	22,658
Population growth/ decline, 1980-1990	-4.27%
1998 Estimate	21,767
2003 Projection	21,944

Population by household type (1990 Census)		
	<i>Persons</i>	
Family households	10,148	47%
Non-family households	9837	45%
Group quarters	1706	8%
Total Population	21,691	100%

Households	Households w/One or More Persons	
1990 Census	<u>Under 18 Years (1990 Census)</u>	
1980 Census	All Households	11,766
Household growth/ decline, 1980-1990	No One Under 18	10,764
	With One or More	
	Under 18	1002

Persons in Households (1990 Census)		
	<i>Households</i>	<i>%</i>
1 Person Households	6574	56
2 Person Households	3510	30
3 Person Households	921	8
4 Person Households	501	4
5 or more Person Households	293	3

Families (1990 Census)	<i>Families</i>
Total	3724
Married couple	2873
Other family, male head	262
Other family, female head	589

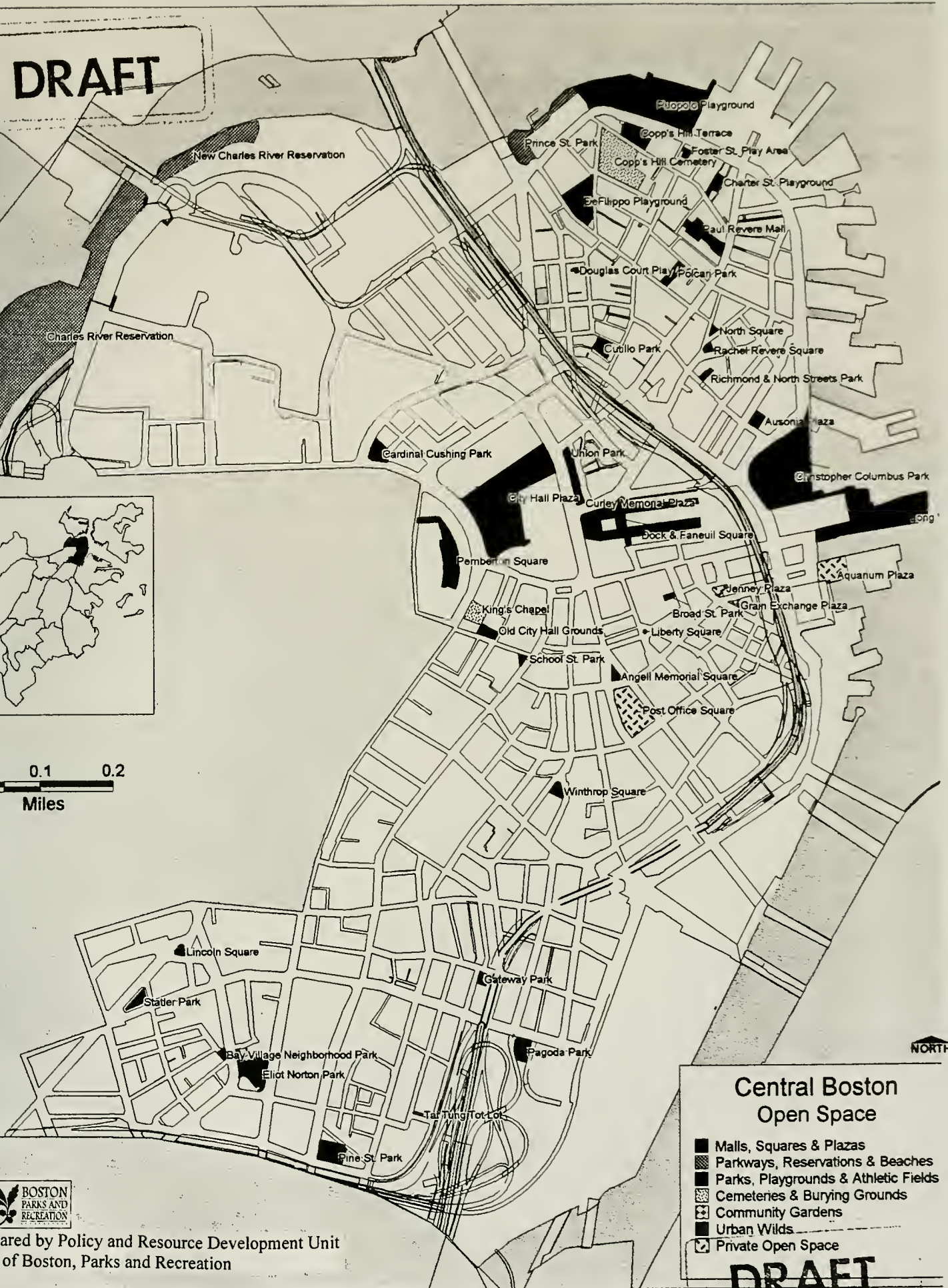
Families as a percent of All Households	31.60%
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DRAFT



Prepared by Policy and Resource Development Unit
City of Boston, Parks and Recreation



Central Boston Open Space

- Malls, Squares & Plazas
- ▨ Parkways, Reservations & Beaches
- Parks, Playgrounds & Athletic Fields
- ▨ Cemeteries & Burying Grounds
- ▨ Community Gardens
- Urban Wilds
- Private Open Space

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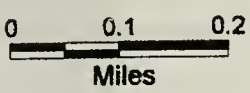
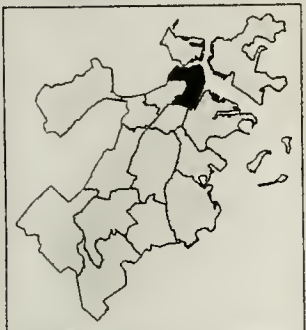
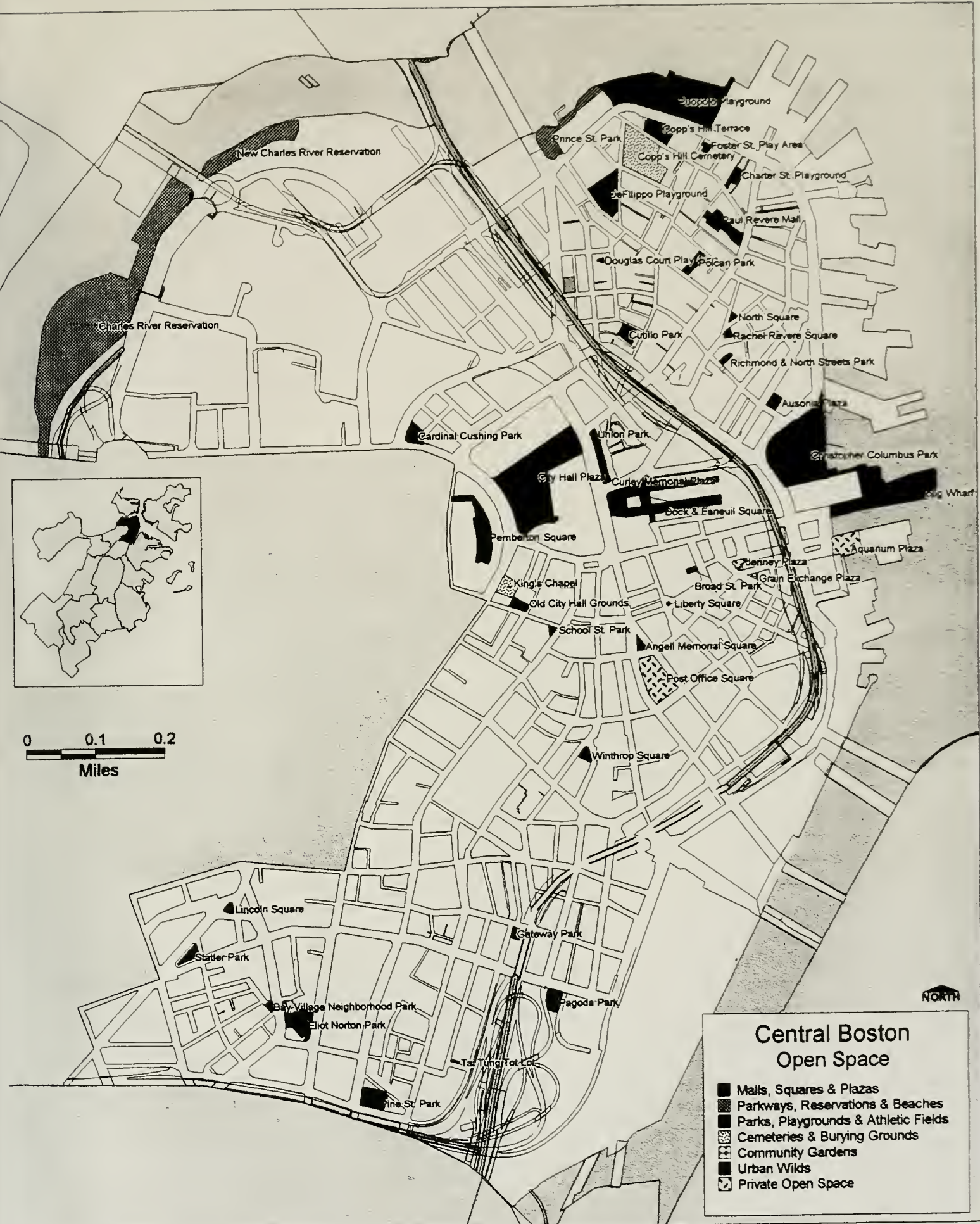


Central Boston
Demographic and Housing Profile
Race

Population	
1990 Census	21,691
1980 Census	22,658
Population growth/ decline, 1980-1990	-4.27%
1998 Estimate	21,767
2003 Projection	21,944

Race	1980 Census	1990 Census	1998 Estimate	2003 Projected
White	18,055	16,629	15,882	15,492
Black	769	680	1006	1228
Asian or Pacific Islander	3595	4191	4646	4954
Other	239	191	233	270
Hispanic	N/A	728	897	1017
		3%	4%	5%





Central Boston Open Space

- Malls, Squares & Plazas
- ▨ Parkway, Reservations & Beaches
- Parks, Playgrounds & Athletic Fields
- ▨ Cemeteries & Burying Grounds
- ▨ Community Gardens
- Urban Wilds
- ▨ Private Open Space

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